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ABSTRACT

Part of a 10 booklet series on talented and gifted education, the booklet presents information for parents about educational programs for talented and gifted children. An historical view of talented and gifted education is presented, along with a definition of gifted and talented students. Characteristics of giftedness are outlined for the following areas: general intellectual ability, specific academic ability, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, visual and performing arts, and psychomotor ability or physical skills. The development of programs for talented and gifted students is examined, along with relevant teaching methods. Curriculum enrichment and the talented/gifted child is discussed in terms of such things as instructional grouping, acceleration, and guidance. A bibliography and list of sources of information on talented and gifted are also provided. (DLS)

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Talented and Gifted School Programs

TALENTED AND GIFTED SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Veronica Boeholt

This series was cooperatively developed by the following: Project Director - Robert Siewert, Specialist, Talented and Gifted Programs, Oregon Department of Education, Salem, Oregon; Project Coordinator - Carleen Matthews, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory; Series Editor - Candy Withycombe; and Richard Arends, University of Oregon.

Oregon Association for Talented And Gifted

Oregon State DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

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FOREWORD

The intent of this booklet is to provide more information for parents about talented and gifted programs and the evolution of those programs within the school. Hopefully, through the acquisition of increased knowledge about talented and gifted students, community members will feel more comfortable participating in those programs.

The booklet provides a historical view of talented and gifted education, a definition of talented and gifted children, a description of program development and curriculum enrichment.

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A BRIEF HISTORY AND INTRODUCTION

TOWARD EQUALITY

American educators are working towards providing equal educational opportunity for all students. Optimally, schools will design programs which provide for the growth of each student to reach individual potential. Parents are also concerned that schools provide an environment that stimulates their children's growth to fullest maturity. State departments of education and local school districts have provided programs for students who have speech handicaps, visual impairments, hearing impairments, brain damage, mental retardation, learning disabilities or emotional disturbances. Parents of handicapped students have become very involved with the schools in designing appropriate programs for their children's individual needs. As federal, state and local school districts have targeted funds for talented and gifted students, it becomes imperative that parents and the schools work in a collaborative effort to develop the best possible talented and gifted programs.

IS GIFTEDNESS A NEW TREND IN EDUCATION?

For many parents, the realization of their child's giftedness is their first introduction into the world of the talented and gifted child. For others, the existence of talented and gifted people have affected the lives of others from ancient history to the present. Which gifted person invented the wheel? Who developed the alphabet? Who designed the ancient pyramids?

Some of the oldest records show the early existence of talented and gifted programs.

- Plato recommended the early selection and training of possibly gifted children for leadership roles.
- A free school for the strongest and most intelligent boys was founded by the Turkish Empire in the fifteenth century.
- Thomas Jefferson felt the need and encouraged the public to annually provide twenty scholarships for students of academic excellence, hoping they would add direction to the New World.

In the 1800's, William T. Harris brought flexible promotion programs, and by the early 1930's, grade skipping, special classes and a few schools for the gifted child emerged. Gifted education was moved to the regular classroom in the mid 1930's and the gifted were to have enriched instruction.

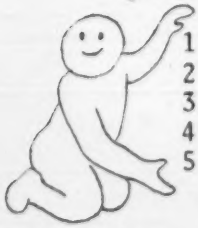
In 1957, the launching of Sputnik I brought national attention to talented and gifted education and science received heavy emphasis in curriculum development. In the 1970's, talented and gifted educational programs have expanded throughout the nation. The rise of the talented and gifted movement has seen the emergence of: literature and periodicals in the field; conventions, conferences, workshops and training centers designed for talented and gifted education; involvement by people in higher education; national, state and local organizations for talented and gifted students; and a great increase in public recognition.

THE TALENTED AND GIFTED

A DEFINITION

In 1970 the U.S. Commissioner of Education, S. P. Marland, was directed by Public Law 91-230 to define "talented and gifted" for purposes of federal education programs. The commissioner's advisory panel established the following definition:

> Talented and gifted children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and services beyond those normally provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society. Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas:



1. General intellectual ability
2. Specific academic aptitude
3. Creative or productive thinking
4. Leadership ability
5. Visual and performing arts

IDENTIFIED AREAS OF THE TALENTED AND GIFTED

According to national statistics, approximately three percent of the national school population has superior intelligence (I.Q. score of 130 or above) and/or talent

qualifying the child for a talented and gifted program. These students consistently excel or perform in one or more of the defined areas of giftedness in Marland's definition. The following are indicators which teachers may use when they select talented and gifted students. These characteristics apply to students with superior performance in each category. Parents might also use the characteristics to assess their child's giftedness.

General intellectual ability is indicated by high scores on tests. Please note here that tests do not always measure giftedness, and that Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt and others did not register as gifted on I.Q. measures. Other characteristics may include exceptional concentration powers, strong self direction, superior overall ability and performance, and a wide variety of interests.

Specific academic ability is measured by high scores on achievement tests. Personal traits may include: strong independence, higher performance and mastery of skills in specific areas, a strong vocabulary in specific area of interest, and concentration of leisure time on special interest topics.

Creative or productive thinking is measured through creativity tests or observation of performance. Some expressions of creative or productive thinkers include:

- Acute sensitivity or awareness of ideas or problems
- High concentration on ideas and elaboration to those ideas
- Creative insight or intuitiveness
- Tremendous search for new experiences

- Persistence in examining and exploring the environment
- Strong problem-solving abilities, ability to solve--check--evaluate--elaborate and then transfer learning into knowledge or experience
- Critical thinking skills involving high objectivity and ability to reflect on learnings
- Originality in thought or product
- Ability to work with practical or impractical data or situations

Leadership ability is shown when a person exerts a strong influence over the thinking of individuals or groups. Characteristics include: skills in goal-setting, coupled with efficiency and enthusiasm which assist groups in achievement of goals; sensitivity to the social and emotional concerns of the group. Strong leaders are not necessarily the most popular persons. Adults or peers may or may not appoint them to leadership positions.

Talent in the visual and performing arts is expressed through outstanding products or performance in fine arts, drama, mime, dance, music, graphics, crafts and other artistic areas. These products or performances tend to be very original and unique. The talented use their art to communicate their feelings and experiences with others.

Talent in psychomotor ability or physical skills is shown through outstanding mechanical or technical skills, or a superior control of the body. Different parts of the body may be stronger than others, producing certain tendencies towards talent in specific sports. For instance, strong and agile legs are a must

for soccer players and runners. A coupling of strong shoulders, arms and legs is needed in swimmers. Exceptional abilities in mechanical or technical skills give psychomotor talent and giftedness. Some careers where this may be viewed are mechanics, electricians, plumbers, typists and others.

GENERAL LEARNING CHARACTERISTICS

Parents of gifted students may discover their child has a wide range of interests, aptitudes and abilities to analyze and organize, extraordinary insight, and a mental age higher than other children of that age level. Gifted students excel in abstract reasoning, creative thinking and problem solving. Another academic tendency is the ability to absorb the standard curriculum rapidly, approximately three times as fast as their peers, and with a high measure of competency. The talented student is not necessarily academically gifted but does possess superior ability which could make an important contribution to society.

TALENTED AND GIFTED PROGRAMS

UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT PARENTS AND SCHOOLS, AND THEIR PARTNERSHIP

Schools and families need to form a partnership supporting the growth of children towards their fullest potential. Although the school is basically responsible for the talented and gifted program, the parent's support and cooperation with that program is vital to its success. The joint educational responsibility of children rests within schools and the home. Schools must respond to the unique needs of the gifted, and parents need to continue to support their children's excitement, interest and involvement with the learning process. Parents continue nurturing their children's giftedness by encouraging the child's feelings and thinking, adding questions of investigation and helping with the analyses process. A triangle must be formed among schools, parents and children which shows linkage between schools and parents, schools and children, and parents and children. Without the joint effort, schools, parents and children do not emerge as richly involved.

Schools need to open their doors to parents, and welcome their involvement. Educators should tell parents, "We need you. We both need mutual support and help. We are all in this together." If the school isolates its program, the parents will keep themselves more isolated, and the child will become more isolated.

Parents will be comfortable supporting talented and gifted programs in schools which have provided them

knowledge about talented and gifted children and their unique needs. No taxpayer is ready to add additional dollars to school funding without a thorough knowledge of present programs existing in a particular school. To support talented and gifted funding, parents must be concerned about unique needs of talented and gifted students. In understanding unique needs, parents become willing to problem solve with schools on how those needs can be met.

Schools must be willing to accept parents' individual levels of involvement with the schools. Parents, like children, are unique, and must be accepted for whatever level of involvement they can give to a school. Some parents may support talented and gifted programs by writing letters to senators, while others may prefer to hold coffees in their homes. One parent may be content in filling out evaluation forms once a year, whereas another parent may be selected chairman of the steering committee.

Parents must be involved in talented and gifted program development for best program planning. Program development has a definite sequence or order. Unique programs for talented and gifted children are built with collaboration between schools and community people. If parents are aware of all the steps in program development, they will understand where they can best intervene, offer help or become part of the program. Knowledge of program development will enable the parent to look at where a program has evolved from, where it is going, and better evaluate the quality of that program. Increased knowledge will result in increased ownership, participation, and responsibility in making the program work successfully. Perhaps parents know that their child has a specific area of interest that is not identified for program support at the school. The same parent might have suggestions for the school's incorporation of the child's specific area of interest into the talented and gifted program, or

the parent may need to provide opportunities for that interest to be pursued away from the classroom.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

A knowledge of the steps taken to develop a talented and gifted program will be invaluable to the concerned parent. By understanding program development, parents gain understanding, which facilitates participation in the development process, as well as providing increased parenting skills with talented and gifted children.

A school district may choose to develop and implement one or a combination of program designs to meet the unique needs of talented and gifted students. The school philosophy, goals and available resources will dictate the individual character of specific programs. Program development for the talented and gifted consists of certain basic components.

Effective programs are developed and planned prior to implementation. The students who are going to participate in the program must be identified. Certain steps must be taken with the professional staff who will be involved. A curriculum must be established and, finally, an ongoing form of evaluation must be determined.

The first step in developing a program is to establish a need. Schools and community persons may see talented and gifted students who are performing or capable of performing at a level higher than the curriculum allows them to perform. This information about discrepancy between capacity and expectations of curriculum, may be gained from formal testing measures or informal observations of performance within more "free" situations. When school and community persons know individual students who are not being challenged properly, a need for talented and gifted programming

emerges as a top priority. The second step would be to form a committee of interested persons from the community and/or school to oversee the development of the talented and gifted program. Responsibilities might include: research on the subject, goal setting, development of philosophy, establishing objectives and timelines, and determining the program design, size and scope. Before the program is complete, the committee should take into consideration the district philosophy and possible limitations like available funds, resources, and physical facilities. The final step prior to implementation is to clearly communicate the program philosophy, design, and goals to all school personnel and the community.

Student, staff and community participants of the program are identified. An efficient identification process must be established, and a screening committee which is responsible for the identification of talented and gifted students is selected. This committee uses multiple criteria in the identification process. School personnel give an initial test which screens certain students. Those students will be given additional tests, and a determination will be made of final student participants for the program. After conferring with the student, parent, staff and other appropriate people, student placement will occur.

The support and understanding of the school staff are vital to the smooth functioning of the gifted program. Since gifted children need different methods of instruction to realize their potential, it is necessary for the staff to use varied teaching techniques. Teaching methods must be appropriate for the unique needs of the talented and gifted student. This may mean acquiring new techniques, modifying old techniques or enlarging upon present techniques. To facilitate effectiveness, the staff should be adequately informed and have access to essential materials. Special workshops, meetings and inservice training sessions may

be helpful. Interested persons, both outside and within the staff, might be surveyed to determine special instructors for the gifted students. Communication should continue to flow freely among students, staff and community members who are involved or interested in the functioning of the program. To maintain the interest of community persons, schools need to listen to their questions and provide answers for them.

Once the program is established it is essential to continuously update it. This may include continued training and awareness of local, state and national research. This may also include travel, and the sharing of information, teaching strategies, concerns and ideas.

The core of a talented and gifted program is the curriculum. Obtaining appropriate research and materials for the development of this curriculum has a direct effect on its success. The learning styles of gifted students are so varied that curriculum content and teaching techniques must be equally diverse. Curriculum must be flexible, easily adapted and changed for individual needs. Continual curriculum exploration, development and supplementation will provide an exceptional program. Community resources and their use within the program are also vital to its optimal functioning.

An objective and thorough evaluation system can be an important tool in analyzing the success of the gifted program. Effective evaluation will also provide direction for program improvement. A well designed evaluation plan may be based upon pre-tests and post-tests of student learning, measurement of goals generated and the activities delivered, a descriptive narrative of program operation, and parental evaluation forms of the program. The careful collection of data is only as valuable as the way it is processed and

used. The continual assessment of the program, both internally and externally, and feedback from student, staff and community, can be the best evaluation tools for development of a successful talented and gifted program.

TEACHING METHODS

The overall goal of schools is to provide the best education for each individual student. Specific instructional techniques and methods work especially well with the talented and gifted student. The quality of the educational experience derived from the use of these techniques will depend to a large extent upon time, class size, administrative philosophy, community support, staff and available resources.

The teacher is a primary character in the creation of an effective talented and gifted program. Teachers need to have an understanding of the gifted student, extensive knowledge of subject matter to be taught and be able to stimulate higher levels of thinking. They need to teach a highly advanced content with emphasis on structure, organizing principles, values and concept development. The use of methods which actively involve the student will encourage development of original ideas and thinking skills, in addition to a more thorough understanding of specific subjects.

Teachers of the gifted need to be more concerned with the process of learning rather than the products. These teachers act as resource persons and catalysts to assist the gifted child's quest for knowledge. The interests and talents of students will be identified, supported and used as an integral part of program planning. Students will be encouraged to make

cross-subject explorations. Self directedness and independence will be encouraged by helping students:

- Establish personal timelines
- Utilize self evaluation
- Expand reading interests
- Develop basic skills
- Improve communication skills

CURRICULUM ENRICHMENT AND THE TALENTED AND GIFTED CHILD

Curriculum programs for talented and gifted children should be as unique and individual as the children themselves. The program should be incorporated into the child's daily program. If the child has mastered the concepts of addition and subtraction in mathematics, the teacher should determine the next concepts to be mastered. Curriculum should be concerned with the development of specific concepts or basic skills, as well as the development of thinking and reasoning skills. Basic skills should be selected from a learning sequence. Materials should be provided for student's learning for specific purposes; curriculum materials should not be selected just because they are different, if there is no specific reason for using them.

If the student's rate of learning is three times as fast as her/his peers, it is possible that the teacher will need to provide three times as much curriculum content for the child. Vital to this pacing is an accurate assessment of concept mastery. Only when a student has mastered a concept is the student ready to move on to the next concept. Mastery must be adequately measured.

When additional work on the development of higher level thinking skills is needed, proper environments need to be provided for talented and gifted children. Gifted children feel reinforced when opportunities are provided for them to exchange ideas and energy with other talented and gifted students. Sometimes this can be arranged through occasional classes outside the

classroom. This type of grouping may not be possible in all schools. Opportunities must be provided for the child to reach other adults, like the media specialist, the principal, the secretary, the custodian, the cook, or someone else in the building who could provide some individual attention or time. Teachers could list topics for discussion on cards, including the questions to be asked that solicit open-ended responses. Parents could also be utilized in this tutoring capacity.

In education today, enrichment has come to mean anything extra added to the basic curriculum. Enrichment may take place presently in many classes, but enrichment needed for talented and gifted students may take on additional characteristics that are unique. The talented and gifted student may require more experiences, different experiences, or in-depth enrichment experiences. The success of the talented and gifted program will depend largely on how effectively this additional enrichment is implemented. Grouping, acceleration and guidance are three types of curriculum enrichment.

INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPING

Talented and gifted students deserve the opportunity to demonstrate capability and develop their fullest potential. How that takes place may not be nearly as important as the fact that it does take place. Separating all talented and gifted students for their entire educational experience from students of differing abilities may not provide for all people's optimal human growth. Opportunities provided for talented and gifted students to work together for part of each day or week will support each student's maximal affective and cognitive growth. Curriculum for these students, as individuals or within groups, should provide great flexibility for learning styles and be an in-depth learning opportunity.

Some commonly used methods of grouping or programming the needs of talented and gifted children follow:

- Cluster grouping within the regular classroom is the placement of students of comparable abilities together in groups so as to provide for mutual stimulation and allow them to identify themselves as individuals as well as a member of the total group.

- Special classes refer to a full-time program (within a grade or age level) where all gifted students are assigned to a specific class.

- Part-time groups or pull-out refers to a special learning experience where the gifted are taken out on a part-time schedule.

- A resource room or magnet class is a room where gifted students spend one or more of their classes with a specifically trained instructor.

- Seminars refer to small groups of talented and gifted taking part in discussion and verbal interaction.

- Mini courses are short term or time courses of specific content for the gifted.

- An itinerant teacher is a traveling teacher for the gifted who acts as a consultant for both students and teachers.

- Summer programs may be provided for gifted students which consist of special classes to study a specific subject or interest.

- o Team teaching may be used by two or more instructors sharing the same gifted class but having different and similar teaching responsibilities.

- o Alternative schools are usually private schools that use different methods and techniques than those of the public school. They may or may not be set up just for gifted students.

Please note that a total program for talented and gifted students will include many of the above methods, not just one of those methods.

ACCELERATION

In order for the talented and gifted to reach their fullest potential, provisions must be made for their rapid progress. Some students exert little effort in courses designed for the average student. Acceleration can be one way of removing a student from a grade level program that is inappropriate and allowing placement and program to be based on ability rather than age. This may take place through any combination of the following methods:

- o Early admission, entering public school prior to the established age limits. This usually requires some testing or measurement of general ability.

- o Double grade promotion refers to skipping a grade level and may be done in conjunction with summer sessions.

- o Ungraded classes eliminate standard yearly grade levels and move students ahead at their own rates.

- Tutors or mentors are people who provide individual attention and intruction for talented and gifted students.

- Correspondence courses are special classes taken through the mail and supervised by school personnel.

- Programmed instruction consists of commercially prepared or teacher prepared materials which present individual concepts broken down into sequential steps, and then provide for the self testing of the mastery of those concepts.

- Advanced placement is gaining college level credit for work completed in high school.

- Credit by examination refers to credit being given for completion of a course by passing a test, rather than participating in the course.

- Independent study refers to the individual pursuit of special goals of studies outside of regular classroom materials. The teacher serves as an advisor to help the student plan and develop the personal study. The teacher and student evaluate the study together.

- Early graduation occurs when an individual fulfills graduation requirements early, by increasing class loads, attending summer sessions or other means.

GUIDANCE

Guidance programs can provide essential service to talented and gifted students. Though many of their guidance needs are the same as others of their age

level, some needs may also be unique. An essential part of the guidance service is in working with the talented and gifted underachiever. Guidance conditions or methods may include:

- Group meetings consisting of a counselor and talented and gifted students who form a group, and then provide feedback and interaction for each other that facilitate growth.
- Career and vocational counseling with emphasis on future career or vocational aims. Talented and gifted students need early career guidance to show where their talents and gifts might be best utilized in the work world.
- Educational counseling to determine which course of instruction would be most appropriate to the achievement of specific individual goals.
- Community programs and sponsorship or internships providing guidance and learning through visitations or experiential work opportunities.
- Scholarship societies supporting personal growth as student groups form and bind themselves together by common subject or interest.
- Study groups to support individuals by discussing and resolving mutual concerns.
- Individual conferences between the student and the counselor.

SUMMARY

The talented and gifted student is not a new entity to the field of education. Programs for the gifted can be traced as far back as Plato. Federal, state and local funds have now been allocated for use with talented and gifted students. For years schools have been concerned primarily with handicapped students--those with brain damage, speech handicaps, visual impairment, hearing impairment, learning disabilities, mental retardation or emotional disturbances. The pendulum has begun to swing, and the needs of the talented and gifted have come to national attention. It is vital for optimal program planning that schools, students, and community members collaborate in the design of talented and gifted programs. To assist each child's growth to fullest potential, both the home and school must be involved in meeting individual needs. Schools need to welcome parents into the planning process, and parents need to share their time, skills and interest within a firm school structure. As knowledge is fully shared between home and school, caring people will join the effort to provide the best educational opportunities for all students, including the talented and gifted.

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